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# 3rd Portland Company In Toxic Metal Pollution Spotlight

by **Amelia Templeton** (</contributor/amelia-templeton/>) OPB | March 2, 2016 6:59 a.m. | Updated: March 2, 2016 2:57 p.m.



Precision Castparts is headquartered in this Portland office building.

Sloan Chambers/OPB files

A third Portland company faces scrutiny for toxic metal pollution.

At a meeting of the Milwaukie City Council Tuesday, state environmental regulators said they will delay issuing a new air quality permit for Precision Castparts due to concerns over metal emissions.

Precision Castparts makes airplane components. One of its large factories sits on the boundary between Southeast Portland and Milwaukie.

That's also where scientists found high concentrations of nickel in moss they were studying.

The company is due to renew its Air Contaminant Discharge Permit. The permits are valid for five years.

DEQ air quality manager David Monro says regulators plan to delay the process so that the company's new emissions permit will include health-based standards the agency plans to develop in response to Portland's air pollution crisis.

"At this point, we're confident saying that Precision Castparts is going to be the source of the nickel hotspot. What we don't know is what the concentrations are in the air that people are breathing," he said.

Monroe says that DEQ needs to install an air quality monitor to learn if the emissions are unhealthy to breathe, but doesn't have a timeline for that yet. He also noted the company emits several other toxic metals that could be of concern.

DEQ officials also said Precision Castparts contacted them a week and a half ago with plans for new air pollution control measures, including changes to filtration systems called baghouses.

Precision Castparts said it had been planning the changes "since well before the current focus on air emissions in SE Portland," and said it had only recently received approval from DEQ to proceed. The improvements will be in place by the end of April, according to the company. "This is a voluntary action and reflects our company's commitment to continuous improvement," wrote company spokesman Jay Khetani.

Dozens of people who live near Precision Castparts facilities showed up at the Milwaukie City Council hearing Tuesday evening to discuss their concerns about potential exposure to toxic air pollution.

They responded with a mix of gratitude and skepticism to the announcement that the company is taking voluntary measures to address its emissions.

"They're trying to get ahead of the issue, before they have over a hundred people protesting in front of their factory. It's smart, politically, on their end. It's a little late coming, but it's good news" said Joshua Baker, a member of the East Side

## Portland Air Coalition.

Precision Castparts is among Oregon's largest companies. It recently was sold to Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway for \$37 billion. In 2013, a team at the University of Massachusetts ranked the company the number one toxic air polluter in the country. The ranking was based on the toxicity of pollution at all of a company's facilities, as well as the health risk to people nearby.

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